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# Hearing set on CALFED plan

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By MATT WEISER  
Staff writer

WALNUT GROVE — Delta residents have a huge stake in restoring the complex estuary they call home, but their voices are rarely heard on the issue.

An opportunity to change that comes Wednesday in Walnut Grove as CALFED holds a public hearing on its Delta restoration plans.

It is the only public hearing on the CALFED plan scheduled in the heart of the Delta for a project that could change the region forever.

The meeting begins at 6 p.m. with an informal question-and-answer session. The public hearing starts at 7 p.m. Both are at the Jean Harvie Community Center in Walnut Grove.

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program began in 1995 by joint declaration of Gov. Pete Wilson and the Clinton Administration. Its mission is to solve environmental and water supply problems in the Delta, the state's largest drinking water source.

The Delta was originally a vast inland marsh that teemed with wildlife.

## GET INVOLVED

**What:** CALFED public hearing on plans to restore the Delta

**When:** Q&A at 6 p.m. Wednesday, hearing at 7 p.m.

**Where:** Jean Harvie Community Center, 14273 River Road, Walnut Grove, off Highway 160 north of Rio Vista.

**Information:** 1-916-657-2666, 1-800-700-5752 or

Since California was first settled 150 years ago, Delta waterways were diked and channeled for navigation and farming.

Fresh water from the Sierra Nevada once moved slowly through the Delta and out to sea, nourishing a rich fishery along the way.

Today, much of that fresh water is diverted to thirsty Southern California cities by powerful pumps. This siphoning causes salty ocean water to intrude, altering habitats and harming local water quality.

Flooding has also increased due to aging levees and land settling

on Delta island interiors due to organic decay.

In March, CALFED released a draft plan offering three alternatives:

- Leave the water-delivery system essentially as it is in the Delta.

- Create a "through-Delta" delivery system that would widen channels and flood some islands. Some levees would be moved farther apart to create shallow fish habitat and reduce flood dangers.

- Build a giant canal around the eastern edge of the Delta to deliver high-quality water directly from rivers to export pumps, ending pumping from the heart of the Delta itself.

The three alternatives range in cost from \$9 billion to \$10.5 billion. All include creating or improving up to 191,000 acres of wetlands to help wildlife, building new reservoirs and strengthening levees.

The Walnut Grove hearing is one of 17 on the CALFED plan being held across the state. The next hearing, and the only one in Contra Costa County, will be May 13 in Pittsburg.